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Rockdale
Fear God. Honour the King.

MAW

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SERMON,

PREACHED AT THE
METHODIST CHAPEL,

IN
STOCKPORT,

January 24, 1796.

BY JEREMIAH BRETTELL.



[Price One Penny.]

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To the READER.

The following Discourse was never intended for the press, and nothing but the misrepresentations that have circulated concerning it, and the duty I owe to myself and others in vindication of the peaceable truths it contains, could have induced me to have laid this before the Public.

As I believe every part of it to be truly scriptural, I can make no apology for it.

I shall only request the candid reader to excuse some things in the manner of it, as I find myself bound exactly to follow my manuscript in the political part, that they who wish to satisfy themselves concerning the charges against it, may compare the sermon and judge for themselves.

The other part which contains the most important divinity, I have taken the liberty to enlarge, and hope it will prove a blessing to some.

As this sermon was preached on a particular occasion, which accounts for my having wrote the manuscript before; so it became necessary to add a few notes to certain parts of it, which I have accordingly done at the bottom of those pages that require it.

Since the publication of my Address, I observe a little mistake which I then made in the time of certain meetings mentioned therein: this I apprehend is of no material consequence, especially as it is acknowledged to be a mistake.

STOCKPORT,
November 18, 1796.

1 Pet. ii. 17.

*Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God.
Honour the king.*

PURE religion has never appeared so excellent to angels or men, as when it has been displayed in universal love to God and all mankind; and the reverse of this has ever been the pest of all civil and religious society. They are spoken of as such, who *despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities*. And are said to be they, who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit. Jude 8, 19. But leaving these as the most unhappy of all men; we come to them, who love the brotherhood, who fear God, and honour the king. And these are addressed by the apostle in the context as follows; ver. 13, 14, 15, 16, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with welldoing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God". Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king. Honouring all men, as mentioned in the text, respects the civil and courteous behaviour due to every man, but particularly to magistrates. Loving the brotherhood, respects the affectionate behaviour of christians towards each other. Fearing God, and honouring the king, are the two points which I intend to enlarge upon.

I. Fear God. This short exhortation inforces the whole of religion, both as it respects the worship of God, and a general regard to all his laws: and Solomon urged this as such in those comprehensive words, *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man*. Hence the fear of God should be

rightly understood by all, and considered as a true, genuine principle in the heart, that is ever productive of the most amiable fruits of righteousness, in the life and conversation of those who possess it.

1. Fear, as a passion in the soul is common to all human beings, and the fear of God in the minds of unregenerate men is always the result of guilt; and then it is slavish and arises from the dread of punishment: so Felix feared, and trembled, when Paul reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. It is probable that St. James spoke of this when he said, *Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.* The ungodly are afraid to meet their own hearts under the serious reflections of a future state, and a judgment to come. But this slavish fear in them, is often overruled by the mercy of God, that they being moved thereby, may flee from the wrath to come! escape for their life, shun the paths of sin and death, and really work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

2. This fear always more or less attends those whom the apostle denominates as being under the law; who are waiting for the kingdom of God. And they are said to have the spirit of bondage to fear, and there is much cause to them why it should be so. They have clear views of the nature, purity, and extent of God's holy law; they see how far they have come short in every point, and that he is cursed who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. They see the justice of an holy God, and the terrors of God do set themselves in array against them. They fear his wrathful indignation, because they are guilty before him. They feel the impurity and corruption of their nature, and loath and abhor themselves while they repent in dust and ashes. But their bondage to fear, is not only in consequence of this view of their general depravity, for in this state they are often

tempted to doubt the veracity of God to them, and to despair of his goodness and loving kindness, notwithstanding all that he hath done and suffered for them : and while this is the case, they feel the truth of those words, "We are tied and bound with the chain of our sins", and nothing but the mighty power of God in the pitifulness of his great mercy can possibly loose them. And this he graciously condescends to do, by manifesting his goodness, conquering all their fears thereby, and enabling them to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. In that moment they find redemption in his blood the forgiveness of all their sins. Then is that gracious promise of the Father fulfilled in them, "Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves in the stall".

3. They are no longer servants, but sons of God, and because they are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with their spirit, that they are the children of God. They are now delivered from the spirit of bondage, and are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son ; and have peace and joy through believing in him. They have no longer a slavish fear of the justice of God, or a dread of future punishment for sin ; the love of God that is shed abroad in their heart, casteth out this fear. But they now enjoy an holy, filial fear of God, which is a guard to the soul in all times of danger and temptation ; and this is graciously fixed in the heart, for its preservation against all the assaults of the world or the devil : hence, when Joseph was solicited to sin, he said, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? So true it is, that by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil, and that in his fear is strong confidence, because it is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death ; and it is said, The Lord taketh pleasure in them that

fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. Yea, the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. There is no state of grace to which we may arrive in this world, that will safely exempt us from the necessity of this fear. The apostle saw the necessity of guarding the believing Romans against such a delusion, when he said, "Thou standest by faith : be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee".

4. But that which divine goodness hath fixed in the heart for its preservation from all that is evil, will be a constant stimulation to all that is good. Accordingly we find that when Moses was enforcing the divine commands, it was in this form, Thou shalt *fear thy God*, for I am the Lord your God. Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. And when Joseph would shew kindness to his brethren, he assigned this as a cause, *For I fear God*. And wherever genuine piety is found, and is exemplified in acts of devotion towards God, and mercy and kindness towards men, we must always consider it as the result of the true fear of God in the heart : and these only are they who are righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God blameless. Happy then, is the man that feareth always.

II. But why is honouring the king immediately subjoined and recommended with the great duty of fearing God ?

First, Because they who fear God should be the most peaceable, kind, and affectionate of all men.

Secondly, They should be the most dutiful, and upright of all men, in every civil and religious obligation. And,

Thirdly, They should be the most knowing of all men, in these religious and civil obligations as taught in the book of God. See in particular Rom.

xiii. 1,—8. "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power; do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For, for this cause pay you tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, honour to whom honour".

In this passage we learn two general things;

I. That the appointment or place of kings, is the ordinance of God. By me kings reign and princes decree justice. And men must know, that the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and that he sometimes setteth over them the basest of men*, as his rod for their correction. Therefore christians must not resist the civil power, it being the ordinance of God: and if they will resist, they shall receive to themselves damnation, (or condemnation).

We learn,

II. The duty of subjects to kings. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. This subjection must be in all things lawful, in every thing required by the civil power, that can be done with a good conscience; and this must needs be, not only for wrath, (for fear of the wrath of the civil power), but, in the fear of God, religiously for conscience sake: therefore the christian is taught on this sacred

* Dan. iv. 17.

principle to render to all their dues, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honour to whom honour. And never could any civil obligations be more sacredly binding to any than these will appear to be to us, when we consider the circumstances under which the apostle wrote this epistle; namely, at a time when Nero was emperor, who was one of the basest wretches that ever sat upon a throne, and if we contrast this idea to one of the best kings upon the earth, under whose government we enjoy the most peaceable protection in all our civil and religious liberties; we must feel the true force of the apostle's exhortation to Fear God and honour the king.

III. But how should this duty be performed towards him?

1. By cheerfully and peaceably submitting to all the civil laws of the land: this is a duty we owe to God, to the king, and to the common community at large; as members of a great body of people in any nation owe a civil, peaceable relation to each other, by certain rules and laws to which they are all subject.

2. By paying tribute and custom according to those laws, with honesty and uprightness, as a civil and religious duty we owe in common to the king and nation at large. Common morality requires this on every rational principle, for the support of the civil power by which we are protected. But, lest any religious character should sink below this, it is sacredly commanded, Pay you tribute also: render to Cesar the things that are Cesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. Here is the literal and sacred obligation, to render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, and honour to whom honour.

3. But this duty to the king as supreme, should be done by speaking respectfully of his person, and praying heartily for him. His office is sacred: he is said to be the minister of God to thee for good.

But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid ; for he beareth not the sword in vain : and he is to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. As the civil minister of God then, we ought to venerate his person, and to pray most heartily for him, that the wisdom of God may rest upon him, and that the Lord may direct his council in every thing that may be for the peace of his kingdom and government. Hence the apostle exhorts that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

4. But there may be times when we may be called to honour the king in another respect, namely, by declaring to the king that we are no enemies to his person or government. This may be when we are misrepresented to the king, as a people generally disaffected to his government, which I understand some demon hath done respecting the body of Methodists in general : on which account, it has been thought highly expedient by many of our principal Preachers, that we should address his Majesty as a body of people declaring unitedly our firm attachment to his person and laws. And here I would beg leave to observe, that this night six weeks since*, I took the opportunity of addressing you on the two acts then pending in parliament, the one for the better security of his Majesty's person and government, the other for preventing certain seditious meetings that were supposed to be held in an unwarrantable way. I then observed that we had nothing to fear from the passing of those acts : we had always been protected in our religious liberties, and had enjoyed singular marks of his

* This was on the 13th of December, 1795. And my reason for doing this at the time mentioned was, the alarm and fear which some of our brethren were in, that these Acts would extend to hinder many of their religious meetings held in different places, not yet registered at the Bishops' court, or at the Quarter Sessions.

Majesty's attention ; in particular, the late one in the West-Indies, when his Majesty reversed one of the acts passed in a certain island (namely, St. Vincent's*) that was designed most pointedly to destroy the liberty of the Methodists. I reminded you then, that the Methodists had nothing to fear while they were good subjects to King George ; and that I had never found, in all ecclesiastical history, or in any part of the sacred writings, that true christians, possessing the liberties we enjoy, ever interfered with the civil powers, by any application of that kind whatever. On this ground I then advised you to have nothing to do with signing for or against them†. But you have now a different circumstance before you, that of complying with a literal precept in the gospel, to honour your king, by declaring your loyal attachment to his government and laws ; and that too as a vindication of yourselves from the vile aspersions of any to the contrary. And here you may all come forward to sign this address to his Majesty, as such, who truly fear God, and love to honour your king‡.

* See the Arminian Magazine for Jan. 1794, page 56.

† Every one will see that this advice respected the Acts then pending in Parliament, and they may recollect also, that it was on Monday the seventh of the same month when many had gone over to Manchester to sign a petition for Peace, but of this I had no knowledge till some days after, therefore could give no advice on that subject, if I had been so disposed ; and how far this petition was connected with the other two, I have never yet enquired.

‡ Here I must observe that many of our respectable friends in London and in other parts, thought well to draw up an Address to his Majesty, expressing the Loyalty of the Methodists. This Address had received many signatures in various parts of the kingdom, but before it had extended to half the Methodist body, many who approved of the spirit and design of the Address, objected to the manner of doing it. These objections were chiefly comprized in the following particulars :

1. That as the members of the Methodist societies had generally united their signatures on such occasions with the members of the Established Church, it was a new thing for them to do it as a distinct People.

2. That if it was judged needful for them to do it as a distinct people, it should have been more generally agreed upon first by the community at large.

[*The Address being read, it was observed*],

In the discharge of a duty of this kind, we should always remember to be deeply sensible of this important truth, that God has appointed the different stations of men, both in Church and State, for the good order of civil and religious society, and the mutual concord and happiness of mankind at large. The great depravity and disorders of the human race by sin, require these stations of civil authority, for the protection of the good, and the correction of the wicked. Therefore let all men admire and adore the divine goodness in this, as well as in other parts of his wisdom and providence in the protection and government of the world in general.

Lastly, let the attention of every man be called to this one point, *FEAR GOD*. This will lead a man to forsake all sin. This will engage his heart to embrace all that is good, and to have general respect to all the commandments and ordinances of God. Humbly seek unto God that this holy fear may be planted in your hearts. Consider his greatness, his justice, and mercy, and diligently use all those means that may contribute to the salutary influence which such reflections will cause upon the mind : so will it be productive of all good in our lives, and lead us to an happy readiness to every good word and work. Which may our gracious Lord lead us into, for his name's sake.

3. It was found that some of the expressions used in the address were exceptionable to many.

For these reasons chiefly, it was thought best to decline proceeding any further with it at that time. And I am happy to observe, that I never heard of its being at all owing to any disaffection in the Methodist body to the king or his government.

Directions were given where the Address might be signed, when this caution was also added, " See that ye do it sincerely and from your hearts ; that none sign a lie with their right hand".

The Hymn for King George that was sung after the sermon, was taken from the large Hymn-book, page 433, commonly used in all the Methodist Congregations.

1. Sovereign of all, whose will ordains
The powers on earth that be;
By whom our rightful Monarch reigns,
Subject to none but thee :
2. Stir up thy power, appear, appear,
And for thy servant fight;
Support thy great Vicegerent here,
And vindicate his right.
3. Lo ! in the arms of faith and prayer
We bear him to thy Throne:
Receive thy own peculiar care,
The Lord's anointed one.
4. With favour look upon his face,
Thy love's pavillion spread;
And watchful troops of angels place
Around his sacred head.
5. Guard him from all who dare oppose
Thy delegate and thee;
From open and from secret foes,
From force and perfidy !
6. Confound whoe'er his ruin seek,
Or into friends convert;
Give him his adversaries neck,
Give him his people's heart.
7. Let us for conscience-sake revere
The man of thy right hand;
Honour and love thine image here,
And bless his mild command.
8. Thou only giv'st the blessing give :
The glory, Lord, be thine !
Let all with thankful joy receive
The benefit divine.
9. To those, who thee in him obey,
The spirit of grace impart !
His dear, his sacred burden lay
On every loyal heart !
10. Still let us pray and never cease,
" Defend him, Lord, defend !"
'Stablish his throne in glorious peace,
And save him to the end !"

